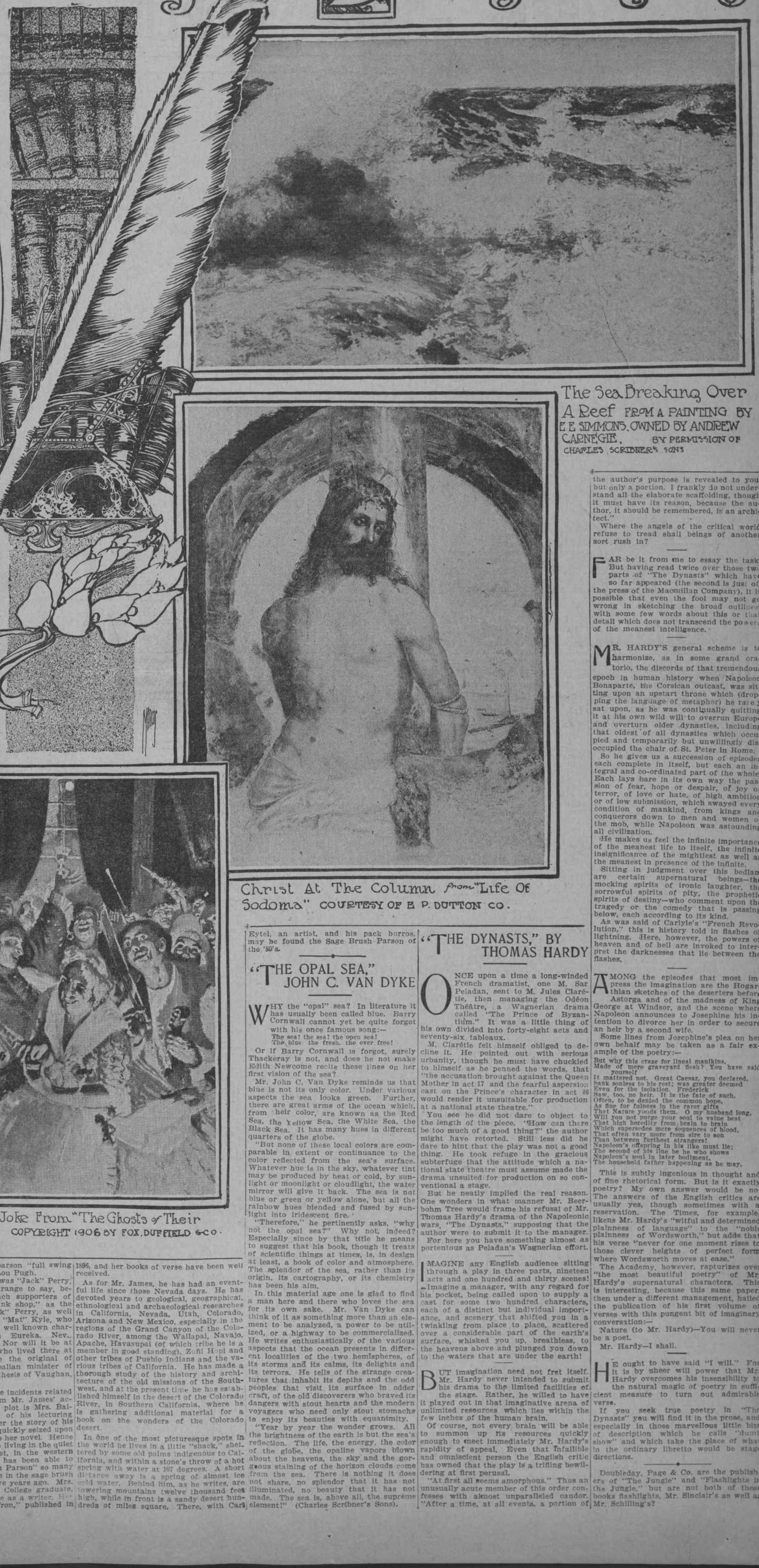
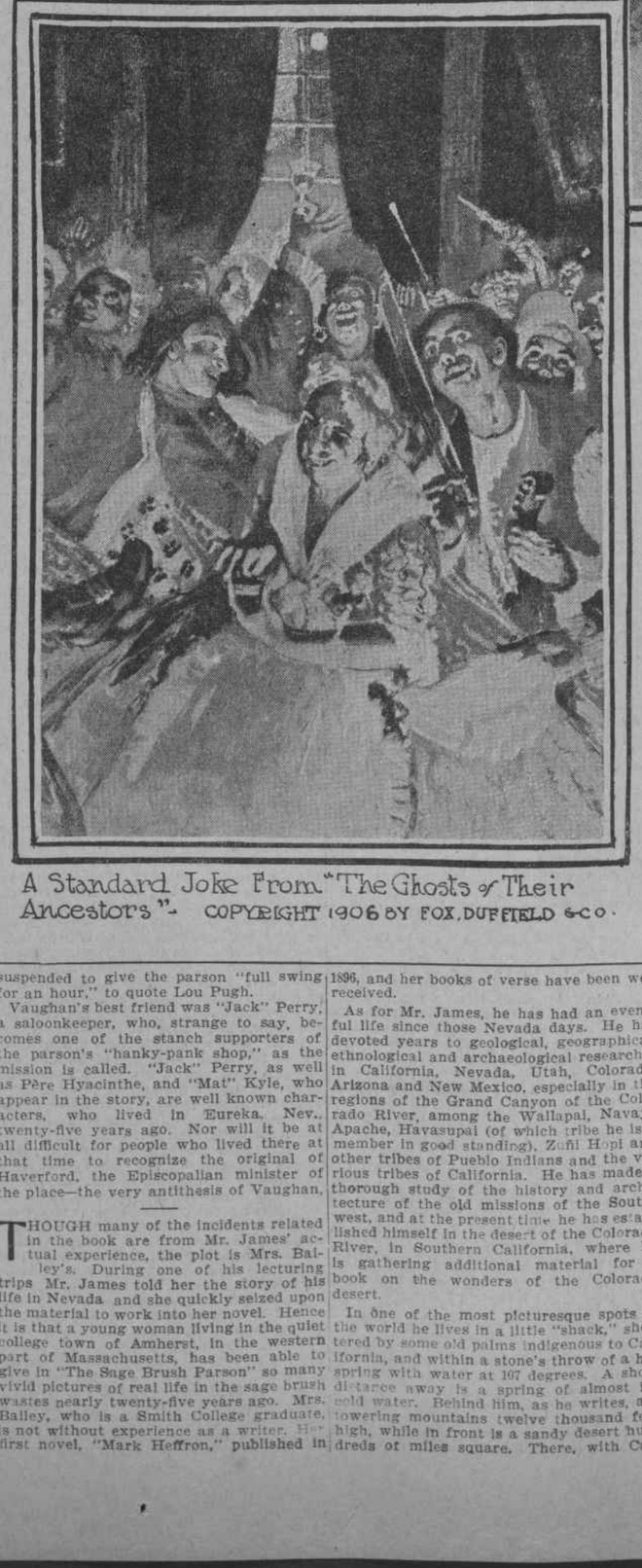
Fiction Poetry and Biography

Alice Ward Bailey, Author of "The Sage Brush Parson" LITTLE, BROWN & CO PUBLISHERS, BOSTON



The Sea Breaking Over A Reef FROM A PAINTING BY E. E. SIMMONS. OWNED BY ANDREW CARNEGIE. BY PERMISSION OF CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Christ At The Column from "Life Of Sodoma" COURTESY OF E. P. DUTTON CO.



A Standard Joke From "The Ghosts of Their Ancestors". COPYRIGHT 1906 BY FOX, DUFFIELD & CO.

JOHN ANTHONY BAZZI AS MAN AND PAINTER

IT is true that Mr. Robert H. Hobart Cust entitles his biographical and critical study of the greatest of the Sienese painters "Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, Hitherto Usually Styled Sodoma."

But if he won't let us stick to the usual style, let us have our revenge on him. John Anthony is not a bit less familiar to our ears than Giovanni Antonio Bazzi. We, who have been in Siena and have always heard him spoken of there as Sodoma, and Sodoma only, doubt whether in his own adopted city any one save an antiquary or a historian would recognize him as Bazzi. Furthermore, even among antiquaries and historians there is doubt whether Bazzi was his real name. Mr. Cust himself allows the alternative form de Bazis. He concedes that authority after authority has called the painter Razzi and that other authorities insist that his real name was Tisoni, or Tissoni, while Bazzi, de Bazis or Razzi was only his pseudonym. He gives reasons, which we are glad to have, for maintaining the Bazzi theory. Truth is always welcome.

The fact remains, however, that for all the latter part of his life Bazzi, or Razzi, or Tisone, was known almost exclusively by his nickname of Sodoma, or Sodona. It was under this name that he was knighted successively by a Pope and an Emperor. Under this name also he was buried. It is the name signed to most of the pictures that are signed at all.

SODOMA was an artist of extraordinarily unequal performance. At his best he was almost the rival of his friend and contemporary, Raphael, by whom, though Raphael was the younger man, he was greatly influenced. At his worst he fell to ignoble depths.

The best work of his best mood is usually thought to be the "Christ Bound to the Column," which has had a curious and unique history.

Originally it formed the central figure in a large fresco of "The Flagellation" painted on the wall of the cloister of the Francisan convent in Siena.

The cloister was open to the air. Hence, time and mischief-loving boys wrought havoc with the fresco. Though time's hand could not be stayed, juvenile high spirits were more reverent with the central figure than with the others.

Della Valle gives a pathetic description of the state in which he found this grand work at the end of the eighteenth century. He says that behind the painting there was a well and that the well mouth opened half way down the thighs of the Saviour's figure. The pious antiquary relates how, through his efforts, certain repairs were done. A door was made to close the well. In order that the whitewash which covered parts of the composition should not offend the eye, he caused a curtain to be painted over it, adding, somewhat plaintively, that this attempted improvement was a failure. Doubtless the poor man helped to hasten the decay of his cherished masterpiece.

At all events, by 1842 little was extant save the figure of Christ and some dim adumbrations of the arms of the flagellators.

IN that year this treasure was sawn from the wall and removed to the custody of the Academy of Fine Arts, where it still remains. The excellent reproductions in Mr. Cust's work shows that Sodoma did a larger amount of good work than is usually accredited to him. He was an able master in expression, motion and color. His taste is something like that of Da Vinci, especially in the figures of women, which have grace, sweetness and uncommon earnestness. In young men he much resembles Raphael. He is not eminent for drawing, grouping or general elegance of form.

Mr. Cust has produced a painstaking and praiseworthy work. (E. P. Dutton Company).

"THE GHOSTS OF THEIR ANCESTORS"

PROBABLY there is nothing or nobody which or who gains so much from distance as an ancestor. When he lies quietly in his grave and his memory alone survives in carven epitaph or printed eulogy it is easy to think of him and to speak of him as a thing of beauty morally, physically and mentally. But to meet one's own great-grandfather in an actual reincarnation would probably be the severest shock that could be inflicted upon the family pride of the topplest swell of to-day.

In this fantastic little satire (Fox, Duffield & Co.) Mr. Weymer Jay Mills has had the clever idea to make the ghosts of the past trip into the mansion of their present day descendant and cure him of his overweening consciousness of hereditary importance.

Here is how they make their entry into the parlor.

"A crowd of shades bedecked in their last earthly garniture were gliding and teetering about; some dignified as at a stately farce, others hilarious with ungraceful levity.

"As the living Knickerbockers appeared in the room the waggling and chortling fell into a monotone, and the company began to pass in review before them, seemingly desirous of attracting individual notice. Few wore the costly attire one would have expected from the tales spread about them by the Knickerbockers of Vesey street. Several were clad in plain humhums and torn fustians. One chirpy dame, in a moth eaten tabby, hugged a little package of Bohea to her stomacher, unmindful of the fact that the luxury had grown much cheaper since she quitted this sphere. Another, who evidently thought herself a beauty, wore a false frontage of goat hair before her muslin cap, and ogled Jonathan as she passed, though he did not seem eager for a flirtation with his ugly great-aunt.

"An ungainly yokel stepped on the feet of the Mansion girls, and some bold gentlemen, who had spent a goodly portion of their natural lives in Bridewell, swore at them. Still the awful procession kept moving on—faces were as thick as the tapers glowing in every bracket and candelabrum."

Worst of all, one "monster of a woman," who had been apotheosized in the Knickerbocker ancestry book as little short of a seraph, is highly amused when reminded of the fact.

"The years play great hoaxes," she chuckled. "Those ancestry books are a standard joke with us, and I believe they are looked upon with some suspicion in your own world."

SAGE BRUSH PARSON IN REAL LIFE

Hero of the Novel Is Drawn from a Well Known Author and Lecturer by a Woman's Hand.

"WHO is A. B. Ward?" I was asked the other day by a playwright, who had been reading "The Sage Brush Parson" with a view to its dramatic possibilities.

"I understand," was my answer, "that it is the pen name of a young woman who coined it out of her real name, Alice Ward Bailey."

"A woman? Impossible! How could a woman know so much about the rough life of a Nevada mining camp?"

Nevertheless, my information was true. To add to the problem presented by the book, Mrs. Bailey is not a Western woman. She resides at Amherst, Mass.

A fresh disclosure now minimizes the mystery. Mrs. Bailey drew her hero from life. He is in reality George Wharton James, known from Boston to Los Angeles as a lecturer and writer on the Grand Canyon of Arizona, the Indians of the Painted Desert region, Indian basketry and the old missions of California.

In the story the Rev. Clement Vaughan, "the parson," a Methodist minister from England, settles down as a missionary in the mining town of Eureka in the early 80's. Eureka was known at that time as the roughest mining camp in the sage brush wastes of Nevada. Mr. James' actual experiences would in themselves make an interesting book, but Mrs. Bailey has fitted them into a plot that abounds in dramatic situations.

WHILE it is impossible for the ordinary reader to divide fact from fiction in "The Sage Brush Parson," there still live many old Nevada miners who will recognize the truthful descriptions of the third chapter of the book, entitled "A Service at Lou Pugh's."

Drinking, gambling and dancing were suspended to give the parson "full swing for an hour," to quote Lou Pugh.

Vaughan's best friend was "Jack" Perry, a saloonkeeper, who, strange to say, becomes one of the stanch supporters of the parson's "hanky-pank shop," as the mission is called. "Jack" Perry, as well as Père Hyacinthe, and "Mat" Kyle, who appear in the story, are well known characters, who lived in Eureka, Nev., twenty-five years ago. Nor will it be at all difficult for people who lived there at that time to recognize the original of Haverford, the Episcopalian minister of the place—the very antithesis of Vaughan.

THOUGH many of the incidents related in the book are from Mr. James' actual experience, the plot is Mrs. Bailey's. During one of his lecturing trips Mr. James told her the story of his life in Nevada and she quickly seized upon the material to work into her novel. Hence it is that a young woman living in the quiet college town of Amherst, in the western part of Massachusetts, has been able to give in "The Sage Brush Parson" so many vivid pictures of real life in the sage brush wastes nearly twenty-five years ago. Mrs. Bailey, who is a Smith College graduate, is not without experience as a writer. Her first novel, "Mark Heffron," published in 1896, and her books of verse have been well received.

As for Mr. James, he has had an eventful life since those Nevada days. He has devoted years to geological, geographical, ethnological and archaeological researches in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico, especially in the regions of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, among the Wallapai, Navajo, Apache, Havasupai (of which tribe he is a member in good standing), Zuñi Hopi and other tribes of Pueblo Indians and the various tribes of California. He has made a thorough study of the history and architecture of the old missions of the Southwest, and at the present time he has established himself in the desert of the Colorado River, in Southern California, where he is gathering additional material for a book on the wonders of the Colorado desert.

In one of the most picturesque spots in the world he lives in a little "shack," sheltered by some old palms indigenous to California, and within a stone's throw of a hot spring with water at 107 degrees. A short distance away is a spring of almost ice cold water. Behind him, as he writes, are towering mountains twelve thousand feet high, while in front is a sandy desert hundreds of miles square. There, with Carl Eytel, an artist, and his pack burros, may be found the Sage Brush Parson of the '80's.

"THE OPAL SEA," JOHN C. VAN DYKE

WHY the "opal" sea? In literature it has usually been called blue. Barry Cornwall cannot yet be quite forgot with his once famous song:—

The sea! the sea! the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever free!

Or if Barry Cornwall is forgot, surely Thackeray is not, and does he not make Edith Newcome recite these lines on her first vision of the sea?

Mr. John C. Van Dyke reminds us that blue is not its only color. Under various aspects the sea looks green. Further, there are great arms of the ocean which, from their color, are known as the Red Sea, the Yellow Sea, the White Sea, the Black Sea. It has many hues in different quarters of the globe.

"But none of these local colors are comparable in extent or continuance to the color reflected from the sea's surface. Whatever hue is in the sky, whatever tint may be produced by heat or cold, by sunlight or moonlight or cloudlight, the water mirror will give it back. The sea is not blue or green or yellow alone, but all the rainbow hues blended and fused by sunlight into iridescent fire.

"Therefore," he pertinently asks, "why not the opal sea?" Why not, indeed? Especially since by that title he means to suggest that his book, though it treats of scientific things at times, is, in design at least, a book of color and atmosphere. The splendor of the sea, rather than its origin, its cartography, or its chemistry has been his aim.

In this material age one is glad to find a man here and there who loves the sea for its own sake. Mr. Van Dyke can think of it as something more than an element to be analyzed, a power to be utilized, or a highway to be commercialized. He writes enthusiastically of the various aspects that the ocean presents in different localities of the two hemispheres, of its storms and its calms, its delights and its terrors. He tells of the strange creatures that inhabit its depths and the odd peoples that visit its surface in odder craft, of the old discoverers who braved its dangers with stout hearts and the modern voyagers who need only stout stomachs to enjoy its beauties with equanimity.

"Year by year the wonder grows. All the brightness of the earth is but the sea's reflection. The life, the energy, the color of the globe, the opaline vapors blown about the heavens, the sky and the gorgeous staining of the horizon clouds come from the sea. There is nothing it does not share, no splendor that it has not illuminated, no beauty that it has not made. The sea is, above all, the supreme element!" (Charles Scribner's Sons).

"THE DYNASTS," BY THOMAS HARDY

ONCE upon a time a long-winded French dramatist, one M. Sar Peladan, sent to M. Jules Claretie, then managing the Odéon Théâtre, a Wagnerian drama called "The Prince of Byzantium." It was a little thing of his own divided into forty-eight acts and seventy-six tableaux.

M. Claretie felt himself obliged to decline it. He pointed out with serious urbanity, though he must have chuckled to himself as he penned the words, that "the accusation brought against the Queen Mother in act 17 and the fearful aspersion cast on the Prince's character in act 46 would render it unsuitable for production at a national state theatre."

You see he did not dare to object to the length of the piece. "How can there be too much of a good thing?" the author might have retorted. Still less did he dare to hint that the play was not a good thing. He took refuge in the gracious subterfuge that the attitude which a national state theatre must assume made the drama unsuited for production on so conventional a stage.

But he neatly implied the real reason. One wonders in what manner Mr. Beerbohm Tree would frame his refusal of Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama of the Napoleonic wars, "The Dynasts," supposing that the author were to submit it to the manager.

For here you have something almost as portentous as Peladan's Wagnerian effort.

IMAGINE any English audience sitting through a play in three parts, nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes! Imagine a manager, with any regard for his pocket, being called upon to supply a cast for some two hundred characters, each of a distinct but individual importance, and scenery that shifted you in a twinkling from place to place, scattered over a considerable part of the earth's surface, whisked you up, breathless, to the heavens above and plunged you down to the waters that are under the earth!

BUT imagination need not fret itself. Mr. Hardy never intended to submit his drama to the limited facilities of the stage. Rather, he willed to have it played out in that imaginative arena of unlimited resources which lies within the few inches of the human brain.

Of course, not every brain will be able to summon up its resources quickly enough to meet immediately Mr. Hardy's rapidity of appeal. Even that infallible and omniscient person the English critic has owned that the play is a trifling bewildering at first perusal.

"At first all seems amorphous." Thus an unusually acute member of this order confesses with almost unparalleled candor. "After a time, at all events, a portion of the author's purpose is revealed to you, but only a portion. I frankly do not understand all the elaborate scaffolding, though it must have its reason, because the author, it should be remembered, is an architect."

Where the angels of the critical world refuse to tread shall beings of another sort rush in?

FAR be it from me to essay the task. But having read twice over those two parts of "The Dynasts" which have so far appeared (the second is just off the press of the Macmillan Company), it is possible that even the fool may not go wrong in sketching the broad outlines, with some few words about this or that detail which does not transcend the powers of the meanest intelligence.

MR. HARDY'S general scheme is to harmonize, as in some grand oratorio, the discords of that tremendous epoch in human history when Napoleon Bonaparte, the Corsican outcast, was sitting upon an upstart throne which (dropping the language of metaphor) he rarely sat upon, as he was continually quitting it at his own wild will to overrun Europe and overturn older dynasties, including that oldest of all dynasties which occupied and temporarily but unwillingly disoccupied the chair of St. Peter in Rome.

So he gives us a succession of episodes each complete in itself, but each an integral and co-ordinated part of the whole. Each lays bare in its own way the passion of fear, hope or despair, of joy or terror, of love or hate, of high ambition or of low submission, which swayed every condition of mankind, from kings and conquerors down to men and women of the mob, while Napoleon was astounding all civilization.

He makes us feel the infinite importance of the meanest life to itself, the infinite insignificance of the mightiest as well as the meanest in presence of the infinite.

Sitting in judgment over this bedlam are certain supernatural beings—the mocking spirits of ironic laughter, the sorrowful spirits of pity, the prophetic spirits of destiny—who comment upon the tragedy or the comedy that is passing below, each according to its kind.

As was said of Carlyle's "French Revolution," this is history told in flashes of lightning. Here, however, the powers of heaven and of hell are invoked to interpret the darknesses that lie between the flashes.

AMONG the episodes that most impress the imagination are the Hogarthian sketches of the deserters before Astorga and of the madness of King George at Windsor, and the scene where Napoleon announces to Josephine his intention to divorce her in order to secure an heir by a second wife.

Some lines from Josephine's plea on her own behalf may be taken as a fair example of the poetry:—

But why this craze for lineal manikins,
Made of mere graveyard flesh? You have said yourself
It mattered not, Great Caesar, you declared,
Sank sonless to his rest; was greater deemed
Even for the isolation. Frederick
Saw, too, no heir. It is the fate of such,
Often, to be denied the common hope,
As fine for fulness in the rarer gifts
That Nature yields them. O my husband long,
Will you not purge your soul to value best
That high heredity from brain to brain
Which supersedes mere sequences of blood,
That often vary more from sire to son
Than between furthest strangers!
Napoleon's offspring in his like must lie;
The second of his line be he who shows
Napoleon's soul in later bodiment,
The household father happening as he may.

This is subtly ingenious in thought and of fine rhetorical form. But is it exactly poetry? My own answer would be no. The answers of the English critics are usually yes, though sometimes with a reservation. The Times, for example, likens Mr. Hardy's "witful and determined plainness of language" to the "noble plainness of Wordsworth," but adds that his verse "never for one moment rises to those clever heights of perfect form where Wordsworth moves at ease."

The Academy, however, rapturizes over "the most beautiful poetry" of Mr. Hardy's supernatural characters. This is interesting, because this same paper, then under a different management, hailed the publication of his first volume of verses with this pungent bit of imaginary conversation:—

Nature (to Mr. Hardy)—You will never be a poet.

Mr. Hardy—I shall.

HE ought to have said "I will." For it is by sheer will power that Mr. Hardy overcomes his insensibility to the natural magic of poetry in sufficient measure to turn out admirable verse.

If you seek true poetry in "The Dynasts" you will find it in the prose, and especially in those marvellous little bits of description which he calls "dumb show" and which take the place of what in the ordinary libretto would be stage directions.

Doubleday, Page & Co. are the publishers of "The Jungle" and "Flashlights in the Jungle," but are not both of these books flashlights, Mr. Sinclair's as well as Mr. Schilling's?